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*Review of a Vindication of the Disciplinary
Proceedings · 1852*

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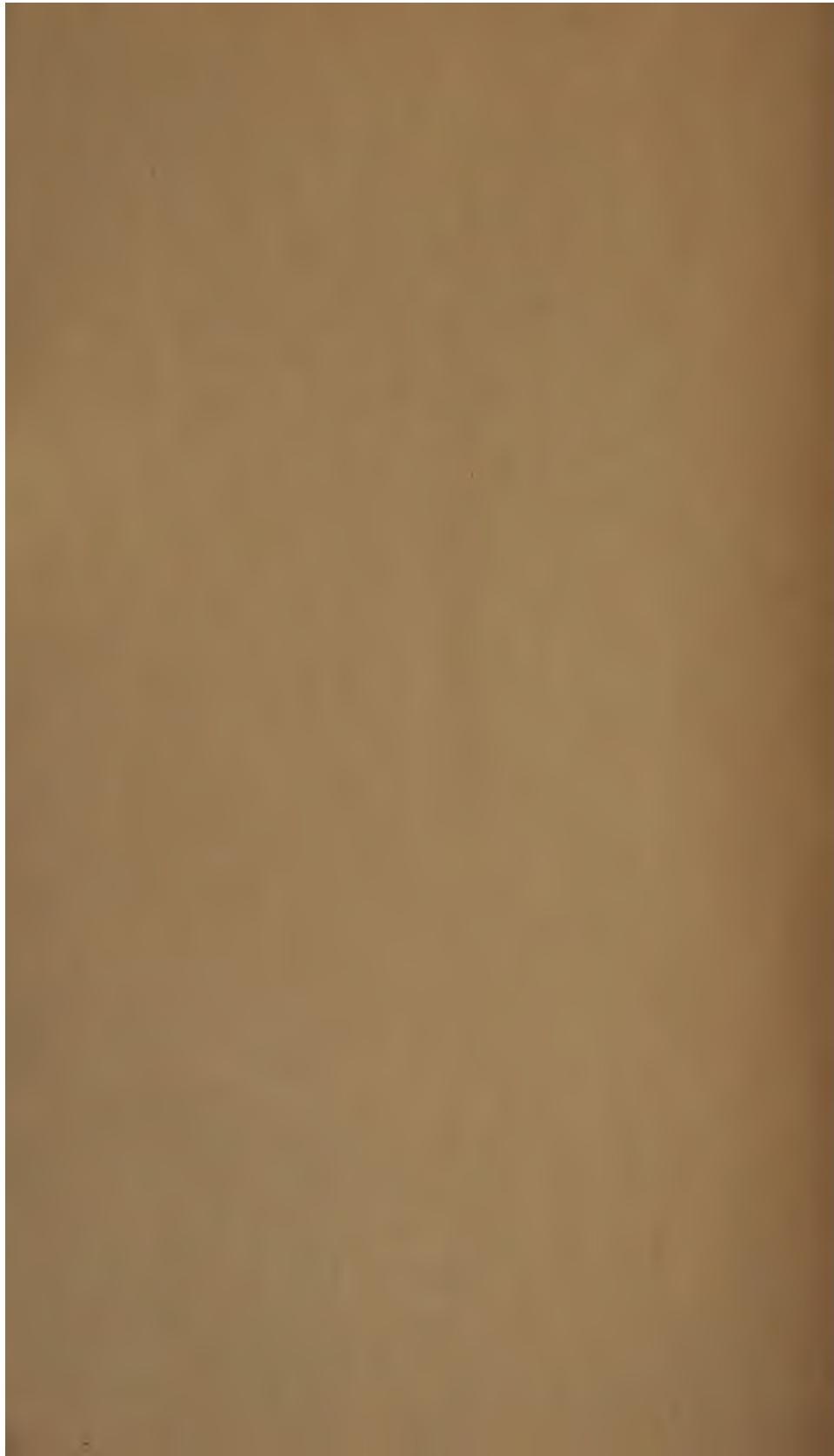
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REVIEW
OF A
VINDICATION OF THE DISCIPLINARY
PROCEEDINGS
OF
NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING
OF
FRIENDS.

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JUL 9 1926

R E V I E W.

THE legitimate objects of controversy are the propagation and the defence of truth. Whenever it is engaged in with any other view, as for the promotion of party purposes, or to screen measures justly liable to objection or censure from the condemnation they deserve, it is almost sure to betray those engaged in it into inconsistency, or lead them deeper into error. In religious societies, whose members are to be supposed united in one common faith, it would seem always to be deplored, on account of the jealousy and estrangement it too often effects among them, changing the zeal for truth into a strife for mastery. This seems to us especially to be dreaded when controversy occurs between the members of the highly professing Society of Friends, claiming, as it does, to have been placed by the Great Head, as a city set upon an hill, to show forth the spiritual nature of Christianity; the meekness, the gentleness, and the entire redemption from the world, of the true believer. Hence unity and harmony are indispensable to the full accomplishment of the great end for which it was raised up. "The servant of the Lord," said Paul to his beloved Timothy, "must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Controversy may, then, be necessary; but it should not be commenced or persisted in unless important principles are at stake and in jeopardy; and it should never be allowed to degenerate into strife.

Occasions, however, as we have had sad reason to know, have occurred among Friends, and they may occur again, wherein

principles that had always been recognized as fixed in our faith, or in our system of church government, have been called in question, denied, or violated ; and, unless the heresy or the departure from long-settled rules and usages were exposed, fears might be justly entertained lest there would follow a general lapse on the part of the Society from its long-avowed belief, or its long-established form of disciplinary proceedings. In such cases it becomes the duty of those who are desirous to retain our ancient faith and order inviolate, to stand forth in their defence ; and, while manifesting the spirit of Him who intrusted both to the keeping of the Society, unhesitatingly to point out the inroad made, whether by open assault, or insidious undermining, and to contend unflinchingly for the right and the true.

It has been in order conscientiously to perform this duty, as we believe, that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, some years ago, issued its Appeal for the ancient doctrines of the religious Society of Friends, pointing out and condemning the unsound sentiments published to the world by two members, and attempted to be fastened on the Society as its modern and more enlightened faith ; and also that the same body, more recently, having, for the purpose of arriving at a correct knowledge of the facts and circumstances that led to and accompanied the separation within the limits of New England Yearly Meeting, directed its Meeting for Sufferings to make an examination of the statements furnished by both bodies there, and to report to the Yearly Meeting ; after considering and adopting the report prepared, forwarded copies of it to them respectively ; with a minute, expressing "its sincere desire, that, under the heavenly influence of Divine love, all parties may be favored to be brought into true fellowship on the only sure foundation, so that we may be enabled to unite as brethren in the promotion of the blessed cause for which the Great Head of the Church raised us up as a people."

How this communication was received and treated by those bodies respectively, is generally known : the larger one refused to read it ; the smaller one read it, and after some time had it printed and published ; its contents thus became generally known throughout the Society.

Since then, which was in 1849, there have been two Con-

ferences held, of committees appointed by four of the Yearly Meetings on this continent, and by the larger body in New England, having for their avowed object "the restoration of that unity and Christian fellowship which formerly characterized the Society." Although they declined making any examination into the causes of the division in New England, yet both of these conferences have virtually indorsed the proceedings of those who now compose the larger body there, and consequently given their sanction to the principles involved in those proceedings, condemning the two Yearly Meetings which have felt themselves restrained from giving countenance to them. Within a short time past there has appeared a pamphlet entitled, "A Vindication of the Disciplinary Proceedings of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends," put forth under the authority of the Meeting for Sufferings, representing the larger body there, as attested by a minute appended thereto.

The object of this publication is stated to be "with a single eye to the clearing of the truth from all misconstruction," "briefly to review some of the positions which are taken in the 'Report,' respecting the disciplinary proceedings of this [New England] Yearly Meeting." The "Report" here alluded to, is that adopted by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in relation to the facts and causes of the division in New England Yearly Meeting, a copy of which we have mentioned as having been sent to each of the two bodies there. From the tenor of the Minute of the Meeting for Sufferings, we should not infer that the "Vindication" had been prepared by a committee of the body indorsing it, though it may have so been; but as they say it was "deliberately considered, approved, and adopted" by it; they, and those they represent, are fully committed to the principles and conclusions contained therein. And inasmuch as the authority of a Conference of committees of four Yearly Meetings may be appealed to as corroborating those principles and conclusions, it is a matter of no little importance and interest to every member of the Society, wherever situated, clearly to understand them and the consequences that may flow from them, before he makes up his mind either to accept or reject them. This may be our apology for offering the following remarks on the "Vindication," without waiting to see whether the meeting

whose report is thus reviewed, shall feel itself called on to take any step in the matter.

In whatever we may have to offer, as our object is solely the defence of what we believe to be the truth, we desire to keep our minds free from any feelings of unkindness towards those whose errors we are attempting to point out and correct; and to say nothing that can be justly charged with tending to separate more widely one part of the Society from the other.

We shall pass over with but little remark the several pages in the fore part of the "Vindication," containing extracts from the different publications put forth by members of the smaller body, given to show "that a spirit of disaffection, and alienation of mind from the body of Friends, a jealous disposition towards them, and a great lack of that love and unity, which, in accordance with the precepts of the gospel of Christ, our discipline enjoins, had existed with those who separated from us [the larger body] for many years." See page 13.

Had the "Vindication" afforded facts or reasoning to show that the charges of defection and intolerance contained in the extracts given, were untrue, and the grievances complained of groundless, there would have appeared some foundation for the inference which it strives to enforce, that the deplorable state which now exists in New England is to be altogether attributed to the smaller body, where they say: "When feelings such as are evinced in the extracts from the publications of the separatists which we have given, have taken root, and are cherished, what other fruits could be looked for, than such as have been brought forth? Alienation of brother from brother, and friend from friend, until open separation took place." See page 16.

Disaffection, and a great lack of love and unity, must of course have existed, where so great dissimilarity of opinion on highly important principles and acts, prevailed long enough to produce a disruption of the ties that had heretofore bound the parties together in one body. Both sides have sufficiently proved this, and the point of interest is, whether that disaffection was to the truth, or to error, and whether the lack of love and unity complained of, arose from an unwillingness to submit to what was right, or merely to the views and requirements of a party in power. Both parties have amply set forth the facts which they

believe connected more or less intimately with the origin and progress of the difficulties, and their final termination in a separation, together with the views which they respectively entertain relative to those facts, and the prominent actors in them; and we apprehend there are few who have taken the pains to make themselves acquainted with these facts and views, but who have come to a judgment in their own minds upon the case, which judgment we may hardly expect to confirm or alter. There are, however, we fully believe, a very large number of Friends who are ignorant of the facts connected with this separation, and we would they would give them a candid examination; but this is not the place to attempt a recital of them, and we shall, therefore, proceed at once to notice the objections raised to some of the principles laid down and enforced by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in its "Report."

In that "Report," the following paragraph occurs, page 29:—

"Although each Yearly Meeting is the judge of its own discipline, there is an understood and implied necessity of conforming in its decisions to principles of religious duty and Christian doctrine, *of civil liberty and constitutional rights common to us all, and always acknowledged and held inviolable by us.*"

After expressing their full approbation of the sentiments contained in the fore part of the paragraph, the "Vindication" says:—

"But how far the decisions of the Yearly Meeting upon the discipline of the Church may or should conform to the principles of 'civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all,' we think very questionable.

"By the principles of civil liberty, and of constitutional right, at least, in our own country, all men may worship God, in the manner and form they may judge their own consciences dictate, *but a member of our Religious Society, by becoming such, relinquishes this right, and agrees to our mode of worship;* and if, in the exercise of his civil liberty and constitutional right, he should adopt any other mode of worship, he would become amenable to the discipline;—and surely it would be no valid plea against the exercise of the discipline, that, by the principles of civil liberty and constitutional right he might choose his own form of worship.

"Again—by the principles of 'civil liberty and constitutional right,' a man may defend his life, or his possessions, by force of arms ;—yet, if a member of our body were to exercise this liberty, the judgment of the Church must needs be exercised upon him; and it would be no good plea for such an one to make, that such judgment was against the principles of 'civil liberty and constitutional right.'" Page 19.

After all that the Society of Friends has passed through, to obtain and to maintain liberty of conscience, it would be an anomalous and most deplorable circumstance, were it correct, as is here asserted, that a member of our religious society, by becoming such, relinquishes the right to "worship God in the manner and form" that his conscience may dictate. There is no right for which our religious society has contended more determinedly, none for which its early members suffered more grievously, than that appertaining to all men, and in its character inalienable, of worshipping according to the dictates of conscience. "Liberty of conscience (says the Discipline of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting) being the common right of all men, and particularly essential to the well-being of religious societies, we hold it to be indispensably incumbent upon us to maintain it inviolably among ourselves." Page 33. The truth of this is too well known to require proof; and we cannot but express our astonishment at finding in this day, those claiming to represent a large body of Friends, putting forth to the public a declaration so humiliating as the above; and if we must admit that it is correct as regards themselves, we must protest against its being received as true in relation to the Society at large.

The part of the quotation relative to civil liberty and constitutional right, evinces confusion of ideas, confounding the right of individuals as members of the community, and their rights as members of particular religious societies.

Every member of the community has the right, in accordance with the principles "of civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all," to adopt and practice such belief and such mode of worship as he may deem just and proper; but he has no right, either civil or religious, to carry his belief or practice into the bosom of a society which does not unite with or approve of them; nor, if already a member of a religious society, has he any right,

civil or religious, to retain his membership, if his belief or practice are incompatible with the faith or discipline of that society, and it see fit to disown him; so that, even in the case supposed in the last paragraph of the extract, of a member of the religious Society of Friends defending "his life or his possessions by force of arms," "the judgment of the Church may be exercised upon him," and he disowned, without in any way interfering with his civil liberty and constitutional right. But in the proceedings instituted by any religious society to reclaim or to disown a delinquent member, there is, as the Report of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting asserts, an implied necessity for the Society, throughout the different stages of the case, to conform its measures and decisions to those "principles of civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all," and which, unless violated, secure to every individual his being dealt with according to the established rules and well-known usages of the Society with which he may be in membership. The support of this principle can in no way weaken the authority of societies over their members, and we cannot but hope that those who have advanced the sentiments on which we have made these comments, will, on further reflection, see, and acknowledge how great a lapse it is from primitive Quakerism, to deny to our members the right to worship the Almighty according to the dictates of their consciences, and to pronounce it "very questionable" how far the decisions of a Yearly Meeting or any other meeting, upon the discipline of the Church, should conform to the "principles of civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all."

The declaration made in the "Report," that "we are one people the world over," the authors of the "Vindication" accede to, "but (they say) we do not think it follows from this truth, as the 'Report' maintains, when two bodies come before a Yearly Meeting, both under the same title, and each claiming to be the co-ordinate branch of the Society bearing that name, that it is incumbent for such Yearly Meeting to inquire into the disciplinary proceedings of a co-ordinate Yearly Meeting, long established and always acknowledged."

The case will be more clearly understood by adhering to the language of the Philadelphia "Report" throughout, which is,

after the word "name" in the above extract; "it becomes its duty, under the guidance of Divine wisdom, to inquire into the circumstances of the case, so that it may not withhold from those to whom they belong, the precious rights and privileges which membership in our Society confers." This differs materially from the language used in the "Vindication," inasmuch as "inquiring into disciplinary proceedings" may or may not be necessary.

On the first page of the "Vindication," after speaking of the "Narrative of Facts and Circumstances," and the "Declaration of Faith," issued by the larger body in New England, they say :—

"The object the Yearly Meeting had in view in these publications was, that our members within our own borders, as well as *Friends generally in other Yearly Meetings, might be in possession of correct information as to the true causes* which had operated to produce a result so much to be regretted as a secession from the government and meetings of Friends, under the profession of holding to the faith, and supporting the discipline of the Society."

And again, on page 17, in reference to the "Narrative":—

"The principal object Friends of our Yearly Meeting had in view in the compilation of their 'Narrative,' was faithfully to record the workings of a spirit of disaffection and disunity, from its appearance among us, till its final consummation in an open separation from our Religious Body; that *Friends in other Yearly Meetings, as well as within our own limits, might be ascertained of those facts,* and be guarded, so far as the Yearly Meeting was enabled to do it, from a misrepresentation of them."

Now it does not seem to us reasonable, after making such statements as these, for the same body that prepared the publications alluded to, for the purpose here stated, to object "to Friends in other Yearly Meetings" examining them, in order to put themselves in "possession of correct information" relative to "the circumstances of the case;" the very purpose for which the authors say they were prepared and put forth. And "when two bodies come before a Yearly Meeting, both under the same title, and each claiming to be the co-ordinate branch of the So-

ciety bearing that name," both having published statements or narratives for the purpose of giving correct information upon the circumstances of the case, which is most consistent with justice and the duty of the Yearly Meeting, to hear only one side, or to hear both sides? or shall it close its ears and hear neither, deciding which it will acknowledge without making itself acquainted with any of the circumstances on either side?

But it is alleged that if a Yearly Meeting, so appealed to, undertakes to make itself acquainted with "the circumstances of the case," it may involve the necessity of inquiring "into the propriety or regularity of the disciplinary proceedings of a co-ordinate Yearly Meeting or its subordinate branches," [both bodies claim to be the co-ordinate Yearly Meeting,] and on page 4, of the "Vindication," it is said that such inquiry implies that those meetings must be amenable to the Yearly Meeting making the investigation. This latter, however, is a gratuitous assumption. Suppose the Yearly Meeting, upon an examination of the statements presented by both parties, should find that the causes which have produced the separation are inseparably connected with alleged violations of the discipline of the Society, involving fundamental principles of its church government, charged by the parties respectively on each other, it certainly may make such examination as to it may appear necessary, into the truth or error of these charges: but the examination is made solely to enable it (as the Philadelphia "Report" says), "under the guidance of Divine wisdom to come to a right decision for itself," so that it may not sanction such a departure from fundamental principles, should it be found to exist, nor do wrong by "withholding from those to whom they belong (whichever party it may be), the precious rights and privileges which membership in our Society confers." Having done this, its present duty is performed, and the wrong, if wrong has been done, must rest with the party inflicting it.

We think there need be but little said in relation to the explanation given in the "Vindication" on the first point mentioned in the Philadelphia "Report," as showing that important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights, had been disregarded, viz.:—

"In the attempt to procure the disownment of a minister in

the Society upon an accusation of detraction, and upon other charges, based upon or growing out of his endeavors, in accordance with what he believed to be his religious duty, to prevent the reception and spread of sentiments contained in printed doctrinal works, written and published by a Friend from England then in this country; which sentiments, in common with many other Friends, he believed to be opposed to the acknowledged doctrines of the Society." *Vind.*, p. 21.

The "Vindication" reiterates the charge of detraction, and makes extracts from the discipline of New England, from William Penn's works, and from I. Penington, to show the evils resulting from that vice, with which we can fully unite; but there is nothing to show that the alleged offence was other than what the Philadelphia "Report" represents it to have been.

The whole force of what is said on either side depends on the truth or error of the sentiment, that it is detraction to declare opinions unsound which are incompatible with the acknowledged faith of the Society, or the persons promulgating or defending such opinions to be unsound, or to labor to prevent the spread of such opinions, and to express disunity with those who support them. According as we assent to or dissent from this sentiment, will be the opinion entertained respecting the merits of the case alluded to. It is evident that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting does not assent to the truth of this sentiment, and hence in its "Report" it enforces the doctrine of Barclay as to the power of the Church to disown those who are unsound, and the obligation resting on all its members "to hold the right and shut out the wrong." We have not been able to discover any testimony, from a trustworthy source, intended to fasten the charge of detraction on the party arraigned, which does not rest upon the assumption that the offence was committed by his "endeavors in accordance with what he believed to be his religious duty to prevent the reception and spread" of unsound doctrines; and any allegation to the contrary is sufficiently disproved by the fact, never denied, that when his appeal came before the Quarterly Meeting of Rhode Island; and he, knowing that his labors had been construed as defamation, claimed the right of objecting to such of the committee appointed in the case as he deemed unfit to serve; a right secured by the discipline of New England to those alone who have been disowned for detrac-

tion, it was denied to him by the meeting, as the discipline confers it; one of the Yearly Meeting's Committee giving as the reason, *that the complaint was not for detraction*; that if the word *detraction* was in the complaint, it was incidental, and hence it did not come within the meaning of the provision of the discipline. (See J. Wilbur's "Narrative," p. 109.) It seems not a little singular to us, to see introduced into the "Vindication" extracts from works published long since the case was finally decided by New England Yearly Meeting; and some of them at least not put forth by this individual, "statements (it says) to be sure put in print since the secession," but which are now put forth as though they were to be taken as proof of the truth of the "accusation" commented on in the Philadelphia "Report."

The "Vindication" unhesitatingly admits the correctness of the statement made in the second point of the "Report," viz.: "In the Committee of a Yearly Meeting summoning a member before it to answer certain charges made by it, dealing with him as an offender, and requiring him to make concessions to them, and endeavoring to induce him to sign a written acknowledgment drawn up by a part of their own body." It says: "That the appointment of this Committee was strictly in accordance with the usages of New England Yearly Meeting is certain. Similar Committees have been appointed by this Yearly Meeting, from time to time, since 1759, to the time of the separation." And then, in allusion to the authority and action of these Committees, as alluded to in the "Report," it says:—

"If, therefore, it be in accordance with the important principles and usages of the Society for the Yearly Meeting to appoint such Committees, and charge them with the duty of advising and laboring with both Meetings and individuals, it surely can be no disregard of such important principles and usages for such Committees to attend to their appointments, and faithfully labor for the upholding of our testimonies, and for the right administration of the discipline."

"This is precisely what the Committee of New England Yearly Meeting have done, and all they have done, in the case alluded to." P. 31.

We think no member who has any correct idea of the rights appertaining to his station in our religious Society, can need any

further evidence of how far "important principles and usages of the Society as well as private rights" are put in jeopardy, when such powers are accorded to and exercised by such Committees, than the simple statement of their proceedings as made in the Philadelphia "Report." If he does, let him bear in mind, what we shall in another place see maintained in the "Vindication," that these Committees carry with them the full authority of the Yearly Meeting.

The "Vindication" gives an explanation relative to the "written acknowledgment" alluded to in the "Report," which it represents as follows: "A Friend writes a letter to his friend, in which the latter thinks he perceives some paragraphs implicating him and other Friends. The writer disavows any intention of making such implications, and expresses his willingness to disavow in writing any intention of doing so. Whereupon, *at his request*, a paper is prepared containing such disavowal, which he then refuses to sign."

This seems but a small matter when considered as a transaction between two friends, though the friend written to would have been very unreasonable not to be satisfied with the verbal explanation; but it assumes a very different aspect when viewed, as it really was, a requisition made on a Friend of good standing, who had been summoned before a Committee of his Yearly Meeting to answer certain charges preferred against him, to acknowledge to the truth of part of those charges. Even if the transaction has been the simple affair the "Vindication" represents it, yet as a new feature in the powers assumed by a Committee of a Yearly Meeting, and one very liable to abuse, it would involve "important principles and usages of our Society," and ought not to be admitted; Monthly Meetings being the proper bodies to receive and judge of all acknowledgments. But the "acknowledgment" was not the simple affair which the authors of the "Vindication" seem now to suppose. The "Narrative" put forth by the Yearly Meeting of New England, before the separation, on page 15, says in reference to it, that, after the Friend implicated had requested the *Yearly Meeting's Committee* "to commit to paper what *they* wished him to sign," "the Committee adjourned to meet again the following morning, and in the recess the following paper [the acknowledgment] was pre-

pared with a hope that [he] *might be convinced of the propriety of signing it.*" And again, on page 16, "On presenting this essay [the acknowledgment] to him, *although the Committee thought it was so worded that he could hardly fail to receive it.*" The parts which we have italicised, show that the Committee that drew it up knew that it was not the simple explanation which the Friend had freely made before all the Committee, and which, on being asked by them, he expressed his entire willingness to have placed on paper, but something different, which they thought they had so worded that he "*might be convinced of the propriety of signing it.*" And any one who will take the trouble to analyze the "paper" as published in the "Vindication," and examine the letter to which it alludes, can readily see that it is in reality an acknowledgment of error, so expressed as to be applied to nearly all, if not the whole, of the acts which had been construed by the Committee as the evidence of a wrong spirit, and deserving of church censure. We should not have noticed what is said respecting this acknowledgment so particularly, had it not been treated in the "Vindication" as a matter of no importance, and the question put: "Can our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting seriously consider this transaction one of their reasons for manifesting disunity with the Yearly Meeting of New England?" We, of course, cannot answer for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; we doubt not, however, that it has been *serious* in whatever reasons it has assigned for its disunity with the different violations of the order and usages of our religious Society which have produced the present division within the limits of New England Yearly Meeting.

The third point made in the Philadelphia "Report" is as follows:—

"In the same Committee's drawing up a charge against a member, bringing it immediately before his Monthly Meeting, and insisting upon its being recorded on the minutes, against the urgent request of the accused that it should be previously investigated; thereby assuming to itself functions which rightfully belong to the overseers and to the Preparative Meeting." P. 33.

To this the "Vindication" replies; that while it admits the course pursued was contrary to the usages of the Society, and that a charge against a member should undergo investigation,

and, if it can be properly done, be settled, before the exposure consequent on its being placed on the minutes of a Monthly Meeting, yet that there is no specific provision in the discipline requiring a case to be laid before the Preparative Meeting—that precedent is not wanting for the course pursued by the Yearly Meeting's Committee—that the individual in this case had been labored with by the Yearly Meeting's and Select Quarterly Meeting's Committees—and that “he sought notoriety;” “he was bearing a public testimony, as he said, against unsound doctrines. His defence was justification:” therefore it was to be inferred that he had no objection to the charge made against him being placed at once on the minutes of his Monthly Meeting.

We wish to give full weight to every argument and explanation contained in the “Vindication,” knowing full well that we may be deceived in our judgment of the motives and actions that strike us as unusual and improper. But, nevertheless, we cannot discover in the explanation given, sufficient to justify the course pursued, involving as it did some of the dearest rights of a long-tried and faithful member. The case cited as a precedent is, we suppose, the best, if not the only one which the records in New England Yearly Meeting could furnish, but we cannot perceive wherein its features resemble that to which objections are made in the Philadelphia “Report.” According to the statement of it in the “Vindication,” it appears that it occurred within the limits of New England Yearly Meeting in 1777, at which time a Committee of that Yearly Meeting addressed a communication to one of the Monthly Meetings, *giving advice* as to the course it should pursue in relation to one of its members, who had put forth a pamphlet containing, as we must infer, unsound doctrine. But it does not appear that the Yearly Meeting's Committee had itself brought any charge against the member of the Monthly Meeting; and it is clear that, when its advice was sent to the meeting, the case was already before it, where it had most probably been brought by the overseers, through the Preparative Meeting; and the *advice* given was, that, in case the Monthly Meeting, after patient labor, could not induce the offender to give forth a condemnation of his unsound pamphlet, to disown him; but if they could not agree in this course, then to *ask* assistance from the

Quarterly Meeting. The course pursued by the Yearly Meeting's Committee, on that occasion, we think no one could reasonably object to—the advice was salutary and proper; but we repeat there is no analogy between the proceedings in the case quoted, and those to which the Philadelphia "Report" objects; as any one will at once see upon comparing the two accounts.

As regards the labor which the "Vindication" mentions as having been bestowed before the case was carried to the Monthly Meeting, we must bear in mind that those said to have bestowed it were themselves the accusers, and it was but reasonable to suppose that the other party in the case, that is, the accused, would wish the charges which they preferred against him investigated by disinterested individuals, such as the overseers, or a committee of the Preparative Meeting, before a record of them should be made on the minutes of the Monthly Meeting.

We know not how it was ascertained that the individual "sought notoriety," but if that were the case, are we to infer, as the "Vindication" intimates, that the Yearly Meeting's Committee was influenced to the course they took by a desire, or willingness, to gratify such a wish? if so, it certainly was a "very questionable" motive. But that no such wish existed is sufficiently proved by the fact stated in the "Report," that it was his "urgent request" to have the case first placed in the hands of the overseers.

The importance of the "principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights," disregarded by a Committee of a Yearly Meeting acting in such a case, as is objected to in the Philadelphia "Report," is, we think, too apparent to require us to enter on their exemplification more particularly, but the subject may be further alluded to when we come to speak on some other points.

The fourth point mentioned in the "Report" is as follows:—

"In the same Committee's bringing the power and authority of the Yearly Meeting to bear upon the Monthly Meeting, by claiming the right to join the Committee of the latter in treating with the Friend, and refusing to him the right of opening and explaining what he alleged to be the ground on which he had acted in the discharge of an apprehended duty." P. 35.

To the very important particulars contained in this specification, the "Vindication" attempts no direct reply, but says:—

By referring to the narrative part of the "Report," "embracing," as the authors state, "the facts in which both parties substantially agree"—we find it stated, that

"In the 7th month six of the Yearly Meeting's Committee met the Committee of nine appointed by the Monthly Meeting to attend to the case brought into the Meeting by the Yearly Meeting's Committee. The Yearly Meeting's Committee laid before this Committee of the Monthly Meeting their proof for establishing the correctness of their charge."

"How can it be said in accordance with this statement that the Yearly Meeting's Committee 'claimed the right to join the Committee of the Monthly Meeting in treating with the Friend?' or how can they be said to have disregarded any 'important principles and usages of the Society, or private rights?' On the contrary, it seems to us, that if they had failed to furnish proof of the correctness of the representation of the case which they had made to the Monthly Meeting, the Yearly Meeting's Committee would have failed in an important part of their duty, and might have been justly charged with disregarding 'private rights,' by making representations to the Monthly Meeting, respecting one of its members, of the truth of which they furnished no evidence." P. 36.

Now, the language of the Philadelphia "Report" is so plain and explicit as to what was alluded to in this fourth point, that it seems to us impossible for any one to suppose it to refer in any way to the efforts of the Yearly Meeting's Committee to substantiate the charges it had preferred against the Friend. The "Report" nowhere attempts to condemn them for so doing. The facts alluded to as "bringing the power and authority of the Yearly Meeting to bear upon the Monthly Meeting," were the claim set up by the Yearly Meeting's Committee, after having brought forward a charge against one of the members of a Monthly Meeting, and using all its efforts to establish his guilt, that they should be allowed to join the committee appointed by the meeting in judging of that charge; and to dictate what evidence the person accused should be permitted to produce, to

show his innocence. In reference to this latter point, the "Vindication" says:—

"They objected, to be sure, to an inquiry before the Committee of a Monthly Meeting appointed to treat with an alleged offender, as to the soundness or unsoundness of printed and published works on religious doctrines; and they objected properly; neither by the discipline nor the usages of the Society, are such committees constituted judges of such published doctrinal works; and in our view it would be dangerous to the peace and welfare of the Society that they should be so constituted. It seems to us that there would be great danger from such a course; that a varying and different standard would prevail in different Monthly Meetings." Page 36.

This is all correct enough when applied to judging respecting the "soundness or unsoundness of works on religious doctrines" offered or intended *for publication*; that duty, in this country, having been wisely confided to Meetings for Sufferings; in order that nothing may be thrown before the public by any of its members incompatible with the acknowledged faith of the Society. But to say that Monthly Meetings may not, under any circumstances, judge respecting the "soundness or unsoundness" of works already published, is a novel innovation upon the long-established practice of the Society, and if carried out must lay waste "important principles and usages of the Society as well as private rights." One of the queries addressed to Monthly Meetings (we suppose in New England as well as elsewhere), inquires whether Friends are careful to restrain those under their care from reading pernicious books? How is this to be answered if Monthly Meetings have no right to judge of works already published whether they are pernicious or not? What more pernicious books are there than those that lay waste the precious doctrines of the Society? And are overseers and Monthly Meetings to fold their hands, and see the members disseminating works calculated to effect disorganization and unbelief, without making an attempt to arrest the evil, because the authority to judge of works on doctrines *offered for publication* is intrusted to the Meeting for Sufferings? Such an assumption cannot be admitted for a moment. Monthly Meetings are constantly called on to judge respecting doctrines, both in

receiving and in disowning members, and it would work an entire revolution in the Society if that power was taken from them.

If a member should by preaching or conversation promulgate unsound doctrine, our friends in New England would, we suppose, admit that he ought to be taken under dealing, and, if not reclaimed, be disowned; but if he by publishing or by circulating and recommending works already published, inculcates sentiments altogether opposed to and subversive of the acknowledged faith of the Society, Monthly Meetings, they say, are "neither by the discipline nor the usages of the Society" constituted judges of such doctrinal works, "and it would be dangerous to the peace and welfare of the Society that they should be so constituted," and consequently they must exercise no jurisdiction in the case, and the unsound member may go on endeavoring to overturn the faith of the Society with impunity until the Meeting for Sufferings gives a judgment in the case, which it may never do. Nay, further, according to the views laid down in the "Vindication," if a minister or other member, under a religious concern to prevent the spread of unsound doctrines, and to preserve the Society, declares the individual publishing or spreading such unsound works to be an offender, if he warns his fellow-members against imbibing the unsound sentiments contained in the works he is disseminating, makes extracts from them to show in what their unsoundness consists, and declares that those who uphold and defend the author of such works are giving countenance to unsound sentiments; such an one for so doing renders himself liable to a charge of defamation, and may be prevented from bringing proof of his innocence, because he has no right, when before the Committee of his Monthly Meeting, to refer to the works published in order to show the unsoundness of the sentiments contained in them, and which he was opposing; and so he may be disowned, while the author escapes uncensured.

Let it not be supposed that this is carrying the principle laid down in the "Vindication" to an absurd extreme, which it is not probable could ever occur. It is precisely descriptive of the case that was then at issue before the Monthly Meeting's Committee. The Friend arraigned before them was accused of defamation; his plea of innocence rested upon the alleged fact that

all he had said or done was to oppose the spread of unsound sentiments contained in certain works published by a member, and he appealed to the works themselves to prove the unsoundness of the views that he had labored to prevent the Society from sanctioning. The Yearly Meeting's Committee, who were his accusers, and who had just "laid before the Committee of the Monthly Meetings whatever proof they thought necessary for establishing the correctness of their charge," now claimed the right of joining the latter Committee in judging in the case, and refused to the accused the right of making his defence in his own way, and of explaining the ground on which he had acted in the discharge of what he apprehended to be his duty, by any reference to the works containing the unsound sentiments; taking the position contended for in the "*Vindication*," and declaring that the Monthly Meeting's Committee had no right to judge respecting the soundness or unsoundness of "published doctrinal works;" and of course, so far as their authority extended, they left the Monthly Meeting no data upon which it could come to a conclusion whether its member had or had not been guilty of detraction; and although it exonerated him from all blame, yet through the action of the Quarterly Meeting, and the Yearly Meeting's Committee, he was finally disowned, while the author of the works containing the unsound sentiments retained all his rights as a member.

Is it to be marvelled at, that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting declares that, in so doing, "important principles and usages of the Society as well as private rights were disregarded?"

The fifth point raised in the Philadelphia "*Report*," wherein they think important principles and usages are disregarded, is as follows:—

"*Fifth.* In the same Committee's objecting at a subsequent Monthly Meeting to the reception and adoption of a Report signed by seven of the Committee who had investigated the case, and declared that the charges had not been sustained, while they advised the reading of a report of an opposite character signed by two of the Monthly Meeting's Committee, although it was strongly objected to in the meeting." *Vind.*, p. 37.

To this the "*Vindication*" replies:—

"Whether, by thus objecting to the Report of the seven—

'important principles and usages of the Society' were disregarded—or whether, by such a course, such principles and usages were advocated and maintained, must necessarily depend upon the nature of the report itself, and upon what principles and usages that was founded." *Vind.*, p. 37.

It then goes into an examination of the "Report signed by seven of the committee who had investigated the case and declared *that the charges had not been sustained.*" That Report, in giving the *origin* of the complaint against the Friend, says it *originated* on account of his "labors under an apprehension of religious duty, and in conformity with our Christian discipline against the introduction into our Society of defective principles and doctrines, and for the preservation of those ancient testimonies of truth committed to us as a people."

This account of the *origin of the charge*, the "Vindication" construes into the Friend's sole *defence* against the several items contained in that charge; and goes on to argue that the reprehensible acts are not denied, but admitted, and that it is "the doctrine of the Report of the seven" that a member may do all that was charged against that Friend, and be justified therein, if it was done under a *profession* of "labors under an apprehension of religious duty."

This is altogether a mistake; for immediately preceding the part of the Report speaking of the *origin* of the charge, the Committee say: "Upon a full and deliberate investigation of the case, our judgment is that the charges against the Friend *have not been sustained*, but that *his defence* is sufficient to exonerate him from the same."

The only way to account for this important mistake, is by the fact mentioned in the "Narrative of Facts and Circumstances," that, after the Yearly Meeting's Committee had brought forward its proof of the charges it had preferred, on finding that the Monthly Meeting's Committee were willing to hear whatever the accused thought essential to prove his innocence, it left abruptly, and never heard the defence that was made; and the "Vindication" now assumes that the several items were not disproved.

But this is not the point to which the Philadelphia "Report" alludes as manifesting a disregard of important principles, &c., as is evident from the language used. It is the course pursued by Meeting's Committee—going into the Monthly

Meeting, to whose care and judgment they had submitted the case of one of its members, and while occupying the position of his accusers, using all the influence their appointment conferred on them to prevent the meeting from receiving and adopting the report of its own committee; and striving to coerce it to adopt or record a report from a small fraction of that committee, because it condemned the Friend they were seeking to have disowned; thus endeavoring to constitute themselves, though but appointed to give advice, the executive branch of the Society—the judges as well as accusers. Truly does the Philadelphia "Report" say: "Such a proceeding in treating with offenders is, we think, contrary to any practice in the Society that we have ever been acquainted with; the principle governing in such cases being that of leaning to the side of mercy and forbearance."

The sixth point made in the "Report," as evidence of a disregard of important principles and usages of the Society, is as follows:—

"In the attempt made, first, by the Quarterly Meeting's Committee, and afterwards by the Quarterly Meeting itself, to render null and void the minute of South Kingston Monthly Meeting, which accepted the Report in the case of the Friend alluded to, dismissed the charge against him, and restored him to all his rights as a member and minister; and in afterwards taking up his case by another Monthly Meeting on the same charge, and then disowning him without even going through the regular course prescribed by the discipline." *Vind.* p. 40.

In its comments upon the above, the Philadelphia "Report" says: "It is a great maxim of law and justice that where a man has been tried and acquitted, he cannot be tried again for the same offence." This, replies the "Vindication," is "a maxim of policy merely; absolute justice requires that the really innocent should be held innocent; and the really guilty should be so held;" and if we admit this maxim, we must also admit that the first trial must be a perfect trial—the tribunal a competent one; and the judgment rendered conformable to law. It then alleges that the competency of the tribunal in the case alluded to, "is impeached:" the Quarterly Meeting having decided that the Monthly Meeting was not in a suitable state to conduct the affairs of the Church; and secondly, there was an error in the

proceedings, "inasmuch as the judgment was rendered in direct opposition to the advice of Committees of the Yearly and Quarterly Meetings, appointed to *advise and assist that Monthly Meeting*," therefore there was no legal trial.

Now let us see how far the facts of the case correspond with this reasoning. The Yearly Meeting's Committee drew up the charge against the Friend, and carried it to his Monthly Meeting. The Meeting was anxious not to take it on its minutes unless it first passed through the usual channel ; but the Yearly Meeting's Committee threatened it, that, unless it took action in the case, it would be complained of to its Quarterly Meeting. Here was a plain, undeniable acknowledgment of the competence of the tribunal. The same Committee, together with a Committee of the Quarterly Meeting, followed the case throughout all its stages, and never questioned the competence of the tribunal until after the case was decided ; and at the time the case was decided, so far from calling the authority or competence of the Meeting into question, both the Yearly Meeting's and the Quarterly Meeting's Committees, strove to induce the Meeting to accept the report of the two members of its committee, as a final settlement of the case ; and when the Meeting decided to adopt the Report of the seven, they expressed their concern, that the Friend was thereby "restored to membership." The idea of incompetence in the tribunal had not then occurred ; would it ever have been started had the decision been different ? In order that "opposition to the advice" of these two committees should constitute an error in the proceedings, sufficient to invalidate the final judgment, there must be some law making it obligatory on the Meeting to adopt such advice in such a case : but no such law exists, nor is there any attempt in the "Vindication" to assert or to show that there is. The whole course of the Yearly and Quarterly Meeting's Committees conclusively shows that they considered the proceedings valid and conclusive, until the final decision took place. The judgment come to in the case, as it was contrary neither to the doctrines, the testimonies, nor the discipline of the Society, could not itself vitiate the previous proceedings.

"But (says the Vindication), we hold that the maxim of law, that an acquittal after a legal trial is a bar to a subsequent trial for the same offence, is not a maxim of essential justice, nor can it be applied to cases of dealing with offenders in our religious

Society, without consequences totally subversive of the essential objects of our religious compact."

We must recur to one of the first assertions made in the "Vindication," and on which we have had occasion to remark, in order to account for the entire disregard for "private rights" manifested in this quotation; and that is, the assertion that it is "very questionable how far the decisions of a Yearly Meeting (and consequently its subordinate meetings) upon the discipline of the church, should conform to the principle of civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all." We are unwilling to believe that this doubt exists in the mind of Friends generally, but that they will acknowledge to the truth contained in the following language of the Philadelphia "Report": "The Society of Friends has always guarded with scrupulous care the rights of its members. It has carefully avoided seeking to make a man an offender, and even when a Friend has directly violated the discipline, if he has not been treated with in conformity with its provisions and order, he is, *where justice is done him*, reinstated on his appeal. It is an acknowledged principle among Friends, that it is better an offender should escape disownment, than that his rights, guaranteed by the discipline, should be disregarded. For if meetings and committees do not keep to the discipline themselves, under the direction of the Head of the church, on what right ground can an individual be disowned for his error?" If then it is true, and we believe the practice of all the Yearly Meetings of Friends confirm it, that an acknowledged offender, if he has not been treated with in conformity with the provisions and order of the discipline, is, on his appeal, where justice is done him, reinstated; no plea of necessity or expediency can be admitted, for such an entire disregard of "important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights," as to proceed to try a Friend a second time after the charges preferred against him have once been fully and fairly investigated by the Committee appointed for that purpose, and declared "not to have been sustained," and his meeting come to the conclusion to restore him to his rights as a member. Surely, for another Monthly Meeting to take up his case on the same charges, and disown him, without even going through the regular course prescribed by the discipline, must be regarded "as at variance with

the organization and discipline of the Society." But, says the "Vindication," "if Monthly Meetings through weakness or any other cause justify wrong, or fail to testify against it, how can the Society say that their testimony to the necessity of a Christian life and conversation is consistently borne?"

The discipline points out the way in which such an evil as is here spoken of is to be reached. Let its superior meeting take it under care, and in treating with it, adhere to the discipline and order of the Society, and then the testimony of the Society can be supported, while no important principles will be disregarded, and no private right invaded.

Upon the seventh point stated in the Philadelphia "Report," as evincing a disregard for important principles, &c., clear and undeniable as it appears to us to be, the "Vindication" dwells longer than on any other. It is as follows:—

"In disregarding the provisions of the discipline of New England Yearly Meeting, in the manner of laying down South Kingston Monthly Meeting, by Rhode Island Quarter, and attaching its members to Greenwich Monthly Meeting." *Vind.*, p. 43.

In order to rebut the force of this specification, the "Vindication" enters into an elaborate elucidation of what we suppose will be admitted by all—the subordination of meetings; and quotes from the New England Discipline, the clause recognizing and affirming that subordination, "so that if at any time the Yearly Meeting be dissatisfied with the proceedings of any of the said meetings, or the Quarterly Meeting with the proceedings of any of the Monthly Meetings, or the Monthly Meeting with the proceedings of any of the Preparative Meetings within its limits, such meetings ought with readiness and meekness to render a satisfactory account accordingly."

"All this (it says) has been done, and never has the power so to do by these meetings been doubted or questioned." This we believe is entirely correct, and we cannot therefore see the necessity for entering into any argument to prove it. The question is then put: "What then is there in the discipline to limit this general power?" and they quote the clause of the discipline given in the Philadelphia "Report," which is as follows:—

"When a Quarterly Meeting hath come to a judgment respecting any difference, relative to any Monthly Meeting belonging to them, and notified the same in writing to such Monthly

Meeting, the said Monthly Meeting ought to submit to the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting; but if such Monthly Meeting shall not be satisfied therewith, then the Monthly Meeting may appeal to the Yearly Meeting, against the judgment and determination of the Quarterly Meeting. And if a Monthly Meeting shall *refuse* to take the advice and submit to the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting, and, notwithstanding, *will not appeal* against the determination of the said Meeting, to the Yearly Meeting; *in such case*, the Quarterly Meeting shall be at liberty either to dissolve such Monthly Meeting, or bring the affair before the next or succeeding Yearly Meeting. And in case a Quarterly Meeting shall dissolve a Monthly Meeting, the dissolved Monthly Meeting, or any part thereof, in the name of the said Meeting, shall be at liberty to appeal to the next or succeeding Yearly Meeting, against such dissolution; but if the dissolved Monthly Meeting, or a part thereof in its behalf, *shall not appeal* to the Yearly Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting shall join the members of the said late Monthly Meeting, to such other Monthly Meeting as they may think most convenient; and until such time, shall take care that no inconvenience doth thereby ensue to the members of such dissolved meeting, respecting any branch of our discipline."

"This portion of discipline (says the "Vindication") was adopted, as appears by the date appended to it, in 1748. That portion which we have before quoted was adopted much later, to wit, in 1760. If, therefore, there be any doubt of the entire harmony of the two portions quoted, that last established must by all rules of proper interpretation take precedence.

"We think there is no such want of harmony."

We also think there is no such want of harmony. And we would remark, before going further, that we think it is a mistake in supposing the clause last quoted is intended to *limit* the power *given by the other portion of the discipline*, to Quarterly Meetings over their subordinate meetings, but merely to point out the *manner* in which a Quarterly Meeting is to proceed to exercise that power, so far as to lay down a Monthly Meeting. This is plain, not only from the whole tenor of its provisions, but the first paragraph in it shows that it was intended to apply to any and every case, viz.: "When a Quarterly Meeting has

come to a judgment respecting *any difference*, relative to *any Monthly Meeting* belonging to them." Besides, its whole provisions bear upon, and regulate the most important and responsible act, involving the organization of the Society, which a Quarterly Meeting can perform, and being expressly intended for that purpose, and no other portion of the discipline referring to the subject, or intimating *how* that power of the superior Meeting is to be exercised, it must necessarily apply to every case, and thereby take away every "doubt of entire harmony" between different parts of the discipline.

But, says the "Vindication," "It seems to us that it (the last clause quoted) was intended to apply to a particular case and state of things in a Monthly Meeting;" which it supposes to be, where "there exists in the Monthly Meeting a difference which they are unable to reconcile, and which requires the care of the Quarterly Meeting: a difference which obstructs the regular exercise of the discipline." Now we cannot suppose *any* case that *could* occur in a Monthly Meeting, which proceeded to disturb it so far as to require the care of its Quarterly Meeting, but what is just such an one as the "Vindication" describes as requiring to be treated under the provisions of this section of the discipline. It certainly is precisely the condition which the Yearly and Quarterly Meetings' Committees represented as existing in South Kingston Monthly Meeting. Thus the former committee, in the communication to Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting, respecting that Monthly Meeting, says, that "from the *want of love and unity*, and the spirit of insubordination amongst them, in the management of the concerns of the Society, they are not in a suitable state to conduct the affairs of the church to the honor of truth," and require the care of the Quarterly Meeting. (See "Narrative," page 24.) The Quarterly Meeting's Committee, in its communication to this Monthly Meeting (see *ibid.*, page 27), speaks of proceedings in the Monthly Meeting, "which have had the effect to produce the present unhappy *differences existing in that meeting*," and which they represent "as obstructing the regular exercise of the discipline," and the Quarterly Meeting had taken it under care. So that, did the provisions of this discipline apply, as "it seems" to the authors of the "Vindication," only to such a case as is de-

scribed, according to their own showing, the case of South Kingston Monthly Meeting was precisely such an one; and therefore, by disregarding those provisions, "important principles and usages of the Society" have been entirely set at naught.

The "Vindication" then states a hypothetical case, in which a "Monthly Meeting, or so considerable a number of such meeting, as that they should control its proceedings, should wholly depart from our religious profession in any essential particulars," and sets forth how much time might be consumed, if the provisions of this part of the discipline were regarded, before such Monthly Meeting could be laid down, during which time it would be exercising the powers of a Monthly Meeting; and then says: "Surely no one can believe that the discipline would countenance, or was intended to countenance a proceeding like this." We suppose it did not intend to countenance such a proceeding, but what has that to do with the case which the Philadelphia "Report" specifies, viz., that of South Kingston? There is no similarity between the case supposed and the one in point. According to their own supposition, there are cases to which this rule does apply, and of course, in these, however aggravated, the same length of time might elapse before the Monthly Meeting could be laid down, as in the case just stated, and we must "believe that the discipline intended to countenance" *such delay* in these cases, or it would not have enjoined it. But if the discipline of New England is so defective as to admit of improper delay occurring in an extreme case, let it be amended in the proper way and at the proper time; but while it continues as it is, it cannot be admitted that it may be violated whenever its observance may be deemed inconvenient. The same inconvenience might attend the enforcement of the discipline in almost every other point, and thus render it a dead letter. The "Vindication" goes on to say, that

"The position taken in the 'Report,' is, that, in the laying down of South Kingston Monthly Meeting, and immediately annexing its members to that of Greenwich, 'important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights, have been disregarded,' (*Vind.*, page 49;) and then recites the case of Green Street Monthly Meeting, which, under the authority of the discipline of its Yearly Meeting, in relation to the subordi-

nation of Meetings, was laid down by Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting in 1827: the rectitude and propriety of which proceeding, it says, was never questioned by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and asks, "With what propriety, then, can New England Yearly Meeting be called upon to concede, that a measure which in one Yearly Meeting is right and proper, and in accordance with the 'principles of religious duty and Christian doctrine; of civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all,' can have so far changed its character as to be in disregard of such principles when adopted in another Yearly Meeting, even if there be a reasonable doubt as to the meaning of a clause of the discipline of the latter, and its applicability to the case *which relates simply to the manner of proceeding, in the laying down of a Monthly Meeting, and annexing its members to other Monthly Meetings?*" *Vind.*, p. 40.

The assertion, that "the position taken in the 'Report,' is, that in the *laying down* of South Kingston Monthly Meeting, &c., important principles, &c., have been disregarded," is a mistake. The position is, that in disregarding the provisions of the discipline of New England, *in the manner* of laying down South Kingston Monthly Meeting, important principles, &c., have been disregarded; and this is an important distinction, which destroys the analogy between that case and the case of Green Street Monthly Meeting, laid down by Philadelphia Quarter. In Philadelphia Yearly Meeting there is no discipline prescribing *the manner* in which a Quarterly Meeting must proceed, in laying down a Monthly Meeting; consequently, the discipline was not violated. "The principles of religious duty and Christian doctrine—of civil liberty and constitutional rights, common to us all," were not infringed, and hence the reason why "the rectitude and propriety of the proceedings" cannot be called in question. But in New England, as we have seen, the discipline is explicit, as to *the manner* in which the act is to be accomplished, and the subordinate meetings have the right to expect and insist that their superior meetings shall comply with the discipline in that respect, as in all others; "for if meetings and committees do not keep to the discipline themselves, under the direction of the Head of the Church, on what ground can an individual be disowned for his error?"

It is evident that the reasoning on this point in the "Vindica-

tion" does not satisfy its authors themselves, and they therefore proceed in an attempt to reconcile the course pursued by Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting, with the requisitions of this clause of the discipline. In order to do this, the position is assumed, that the judgment of a Committee of a Meeting, is virtually the judgment of the Meeting appointing the Committee.

"South Kingston Monthly Meeting (they say) had received in writing the judgment of a Committee of the Quarterly Meeting appointed to advise them—on its behalf. Is it, then, an 'assumption,' as the 'Report' holds, 'which would totally change the long-established practice of the Society,' to consider this judgment in effect if not in form as the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting?" *Vind.*, p. 52.

They argue that inasmuch as the discipline of New England Yearly Meeting provides that a superior Meeting to which an appeal is made, "Is to take said appeal into consideration, and determine thereon *by a committee* to be appointed for that purpose;" and because "the acts" of the Meeting for Sufferings "within their powers, are the acts of the Yearly Meeting in effect;" therefore, it is not "an assumption, as the Philadelphia 'Report' holds," to consider the judgment of a committee tantamount to the judgment of the meeting appointing it; and that, acting on this principle in the dissolution of South Kingston Monthly Meeting, "cannot and ought not to be stamped as a departure from the 'principles of religious duty or Christian doctrine'—or from any principles of 'civil liberty or constitutional right,' applicable to the disciplinary proceedings of our Society, or 'common to us all,' as members of the Society." *Vind.*, p. 53.

We shall not stop to demonstrate the wide difference between the general principle thus laid down in the "Vindication," and the examples they have given, where the *discipline* confers extraordinary powers on committees for particular specified purposes. The want of similarity will, we think, suggest itself at once to every person of ordinary perception. It is not pretended that the minute appointing the committee of Rhode Island Quarter, to render advice and assistance to South Kingston Monthly Meeting conferred any extraordinary powers upon it.

This principle, then, which was claimed as imperative by New

England Yearly Meeting before the separation, as is shown in the "Narrative of Facts and Circumstances," (page 28,) and is now again insisted on by the body which "deliberately considered, approved, and adopted" the "Vindication," must be considered a settled principle in their system of church government. How far it is correct that it would, if generally received and acted on, "totally change the long-established practice of the Society," as is asserted in the Philadelphia "Report," it needs not many words to show. Committees are appointed in Monthly Meetings to treat with those who have violated the discipline; if the principle contended for is correct, the committee may come to a judgment against or in favor of the individual, and inform him thereof, before the case is reported on by them to the meeting; and their judgment being of equal authority with that of the meeting, they will virtually restore or disown him, as they may see fit. Thus the rights of members would be altogether at the mercy of their fellow members appointed on such committees. Monthly Meetings would not know how long they would be allowed to exercise their functions as the executive branches of the Society, whenever Committees might be appointed by their Quarters, to advise and assist them. The whole authority of the meeting appointing them being lodged in the hands of such committees within the limits of those Yearly Meetings which prescribe no specific mode for laying down a Monthly Meeting, they might dissolve a Monthly Meeting in the most summary manner; or, as done in the case of South Kingston, oblige them to mutilate their records by erasing such minutes as they disapprove. But this power would be still more fearful in the hands of a Committee of a Yearly Meeting. We have set forth, in the "Vindication," what acts are considered by those who approved and adopted it, as coming within the proper and legitimate duties of such a Committee, as was appointed by New England Yearly Meeting in 1840, "to assist and advise such meetings and members as circumstances may require and way may open for," (see "Narrative of Facts," &c., page 14,) viz.: Summoning a member before it to answer certain charges made by it; dealing with him, and requiring him to make an acknowledgment. Drawing up a charge against a member, taking it into his Monthly Meeting, and

obliging the Monthly Meeting to take it on its minutes without previously receiving the care of overseers or Preparative Meeting; claiming the right to join the Committee of the Monthly Meeting appointed to investigate the case of a member, against whom they had preferred a charge, in judging of his case; refusing the accused the right to bring forward such evidence as he thought essential to show his innocence, and that he was acting strictly in accordance with the discipline; denying a Monthly Meeting any authority to judge of the soundness or unsoundness of the doctrines published in any book; and requiring it to reject or adopt whatever report from a Committee treating with a member, the said Committee may think right. Dictating to Monthly Meetings whom they shall have as clerks or overseers, and obliging them to erase from their records such minutes as they may not wish to be retained. If these are the duties which such a Committee may rightfully perform, as the "Vindication" asserts; and if, in the performance of them, it carries with it the authority of the Yearly Meeting, what is left for the meetings they visit to do, but to register their decrees? Of what possible use can the discipline, the *lex scripta*, be in protecting the rights of members? In the case of appeal by South Kingston Monthly Meeting, from the decision of Rhode Island Quarter, one of the Quarterly Meeting's Committee, when pleading the correctness of the proceedings of the Quarterly Meeting, contended "that the Yearly Meeting's Committee, being appointed directly by the Yearly Meeting, *any advice coming from them had all the authority of discipline* (see J. Wilbur's "Narrative," page 130), and according to the principle laid down in the "Vindication," he was right; so that, where such a Committee fails to find discipline ready-made to suit their purposes, they have nothing to do but to manufacture it for the occasion. Grant this principle, which is now the acknowledged rule with those who have put forth the "Vindication," and by which they contend that the provision of the discipline requiring a Quarterly Meeting as the first step towards the dissolution of a Monthly Meeting, to notify the Monthly Meeting in writing, of the judgment it may have come to respecting any difference existing in it, was complied with by Rhode Island Quarter in the case of South Kingston, inasmuch

as a portion of its Committee, appointed months before, presented to that Monthly Meeting its judgment in the case, which judgment must be received as that of the Quarterly Meeting, and we hesitate not to say that it will, in its operation, leave no ground upon which the rights of members, and the legitimate impartial action of subordinate meetings can rest, or be maintained. The right of appeal, if not annihilated, would be a mockery, and all power would ultimately centre in the hands of certain individuals in the respective Yearly Meetings, who, once placed on their Committees to advise and assist meetings and members, could effectually repress all complaints against their encroachments, and retain their authority until they chose voluntarily to give it up. It is vain to say that, in such a Society as that of Friends, such usurpation and injustice would never be attempted, or, if they were, they could not be submitted to. The principle once established, no one can predict where its operation would stop. In New England Yearly Meeting, it is alleged by those who have put forth the "Vindication," that it has been admitted and acted on for years; and what have been the consequences resulting from its application there? Are they such as to induce the whole Society to indorse and sanction it?

The introduction and spread in the Society of the unsound views published by two members in England, and the efforts made, if not to sanction those views, at least to screen them from condemnation, and to uphold their authors, have been the primary causes of the difficulties and divisions now existing throughout the Society. They are the natural and inevitable consequences of an attempt, or even of an apparent attempt, to impair the faith of such a people as Friends are. We know too well and too generally the purity of life, the devotion, and the deep religious experience of those who have been styled the founders of our Society, and the bitter persecution and dreadful sufferings they passed through while preaching its faith to a benighted world, to be brought universally to believe that they were deceived or uninstructed in the truths of the gospel. Moreover, all those among us who have been made willing to walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing, that is, the Spirit of Truth, which they did, come experimentally to know

an establishment in the same doctrine and testimonies, and that they are no cunningly devised fables, but the unchangeable truth; and they dare do no other than condemn and oppose every attempted innovation upon them. Therefore, while any countenance or connive at such innovations, or resist the testimony of truth from going forth against them—there will be controversy, there will be disunity and distrust, until the Society, in all its component parts, clears itself of the heresy. And this state of things exists within its borders now, calling for earnest, affectionate, brotherly, but uncompromising labor to remove it. But apart from this, we do not hesitate to say that the working of this principle of the plenary power of a Yearly Meeting's Committee, has been the prolific source of the troubles terminating in a separation in New England, and the interruption of that harmony which had heretofore existed between the different Yearly Meetings. It is inseparably connected with a “disregard of important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights,” to which, we trust, some of them at least, will never give their sanction, even by implication.

We now come to the last point mentioned in the “Report,” as involving a disregard of important principles, and which is as follows:—

“In the manner in which the members of the Quarterly Meeting's Committee interfered to produce a separation in Swanzey Monthly Meeting.”

“And here (the ‘Vindication’ says), our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have fallen into an error, quite important to a true understanding of the state of things at Swanzey Monthly Meeting, when the separation took place. They state in substance that the person who had for some years previous acted as clerk, was acknowledged by both ‘parties’ to have been in that station when the Meeting adjourned the month before. New England Yearly Meeting do not and never have so acknowledged.”

It is not necessary to go into any analysis here of the statement made by the parties respectively, of the transactions in Swanzey Monthly Meeting relative to the appointment of a clerk to that meeting; they are fully set forth in the Philadelphia “Report,” and every one can draw his own conclusions

therefrom. The principal discrepancy between them is, that both bodies claim to have been respectively supported in the course they pursued by the greater part of the Monthly Meeting. The statement in the Philadelphia "Report," "that the person who had, for some years previous, acted as clerk, was acknowledged, by *both parties*, to have been in that station when the meeting adjourned the month before," is doubtless predicated upon the fact that, after the old clerk had, in the seventh month (the month before the separation took place), made the minute referring the consideration of the report of the committee on clerk to the next meeting, under the care of the committee, the meeting went on in the transaction of its other business, in which the Yearly and Quarterly Meetings' Committees took part, urging the appointment of certain members recommended by them as overseers, and that without the slightest objection being made to the Friend at the table acting as clerk: the same clerk signed the reports to the Quarterly Meeting, and the Quarterly Meeting received and accepted these reports as from the regularly organized Monthly Meeting. This certainly must convey to every unprejudiced mind the belief, that both parties then acquiesced in the old clerk having retained his station. But "to show how Friends of New England Yearly Meeting view this matter," the "Vindication" gives "the following extract from a report made to the Yearly Meeting in 1845, by a committee of the representatives from the several Quarterly Meetings except Rhode Island."

"We are also united in judgment, that at said Monthly Meeting, in the seventh month, Thomas Wilbur was bound by the discipline and good order of our Society to record the clearly expressed sense of the Monthly Meeting appointing David Shove as its clerk, in accordance with the advice of the Yearly Meeting's Committee; and by refusing to do so, so far departed from the discipline and usages of our Society, as well as from the subordination of inferior to superior meetings, and individuals to the body, as to disqualify him from any longer holding the office of clerk of Swanzey Monthly Meeting; and *said office there-upon became vacant.* And it is further our sense and judgment that, at Swanzey Monthly Meeting, in the eighth month, David Shove was rightfully the clerk, having been thereto duly ap-

pointed, and was, remained, and is the only properly constituted clerk of Swanzey Monthly Meeting." *Vind.*, p. 54.

We know not what portion of the *discipline* provides for the kind of minute which a clerk must make, even where the sense of a meeting is *clearly expressed*; but certainly there is none obliging a clerk to record, as the clearly expressed sense of the meeting, what one-half of its active members are opposed to, though a Yearly Meeting's Committee may advise it. But leaving that point, it appears to us, that the assumption of the Committee of Representatives, that because the advice of the Yearly Meeting's Committee who should be appointed as clerk of the Monthly Meeting, was not complied with at once, but the old clerk made a minute referring the subject to the next meeting, therefore the office of clerk became immediately vacant, is irreconcilable with the facts already stated, and fully admitted by all, viz.: the business of the meeting continuing to be regularly transacted, the Committees of the Yearly and Quarterly Meetings taking an active part therein, as the business of a fully organized Monthly Meeting; and the reports of the meeting signed by the old clerk, being received by the subsequent Quarterly Meeting, without any hint being given that it was thought he had vacated his station.

In the communication presented by the Yearly Meeting's Committee to the Monthly Meeting at that time, besides advising who the meeting should appoint as clerk, they also advised the appointment of certain individuals as overseers, naming one in particular themselves; and after the minute respecting the appointment of clerk had been made, and the meeting passed from that subject, the consideration of the appointment of those individuals to that important station was entered on, and the Yearly Meeting's Committee strongly urged the meeting to act in the case and make the appointment. Could that Committee and the Quarterly Meeting's Committee have so acted, had they then been of the opinion subsequently advanced by the Committee of Representatives, that the Monthly Meeting was without a clerk, and disorganized?

While contending for the absolute power of a Yearly Meeting's Committee, its right to direct who the officers of an inferior meeting shall be, and asserting that a clerk of a Monthly

Meeting at once vacates his station, by declining, though in accordance with the judgment of a large portion of the meeting, clearly expressed, to record the appointment of an individual to that station whom they may recommend, it is highly necessary that such a committee should at least be required to act consistently; and not, when circumstances appear to render it expedient, repudiate a proceeding, in which, at the time of its transpiring, they took an active part, and, by their acquiescence, sanctioned.

The Yearly and Quarterly Meeting's Committees and the Quarterly Meeting itself, fully corroborate the statement made in the Philadelphia "Report," that both parties did then acknowledge the old clerk to have been in that station when the meeting adjourned, in the seventh month, the meeting before the separation took place; and to us it appears necessarily to follow from that, and the character of the events in the eighth month, "that the meeting which, with the old clerk at the table, proceeded in the transaction of its business after the others had adjourned, in no way lost its standing as Swanzey Monthly Meeting."

It has been repeatedly alleged by some who were unwilling to admit, to their full extent, the errors committed by the Yearly Meeting of New England prior to the separation, but who, nevertheless, could not deny the fairness of the deductions drawn in the Philadelphia "Report" from the facts as they are given by both the bodies there, that the circumstances of the case were not fully understood; and that, if we could obtain the explanations of those composing the larger body, we should find it was not their intention to depart from the acknowledged rules and order of church government in the Society, nor to advocate or enforce principles adverse to those heretofore recognized and regarded in its disciplinary proceedings, however much the transactions narrated by them may appear to warrant such a conclusion. We have no wish to impugn motives, but, after a careful and candid examination of the explanations and arguments given in the "Vindication," we cannot reject the conviction, that it contains nothing that alters the aspect of any of the acts designated in the Philadelphia "Report," as evincing a disregard of important principles and private rights; while the departure

from those principles, and the infringement of those rights, is either extenuated or defended.

We think there can no longer be a reasonable doubt as to the principles of church government embraced or, at least, acted on by that body. They are, as we have seen, distinctly set forth in the "Vindication," and include, among others,—a denial to their members of the right to worship according to the dictates of their conscience;—an avowed disregard, in their administration of the discipline, of those principles of civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all; a denial to Monthly Meetings of the right to judge of the soundness or unsoundness of any published works;—the equal authority and obligation of the judgment of a committee with the decision of the meeting appointing it;—and the absolute authority of a Yearly Meeting's Committee to give advice in all cases whether of individuals or subordinate meetings, which advice carries with it the authority of the Yearly Meeting, is in fact discipline, and must be received and recorded by the subordinate meetings without regard to their own judgment in the case.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has clearly set forth these principles in its "Report," and pointed out the sad consequences resulting from their operation, as manifested in the course of events which led to and accompanied the separation in New England, and has so acted towards the two bodies there as not to sanction them, but to continue steadfast in the support of the ancient order and discipline of the Church. Her views are expressed in the following language:—

"The obstruction which exists in our Yearly Meeting, to holding a correspondence with that body in New England, which has authorized or sustained the proceedings upon which we have animadverted, does not arise from any feeling of hostility to them, nor from partiality to any man; but from a conscientious belief, that, whatever may have been the motive, their acts have gone to condemn many who have been standing for the ancient faith of Friends, and against the introduction of error; that in so doing, wrong opinions have received support, and the discipline and rights of members have been violated; and that it was the course pursued by them in these transactions

which led to the separation. Until, therefore, these proceedings shall be rectified or annulled, we see not how unity is to be restored." See "Report," page 38.

The Yearly Meeting of Ohio has also been restrained from sanctioning these principles and the evils growing out of them, and although she has not published anything on the subject, we doubt not it is from the same cause that has actuated her elder sister.

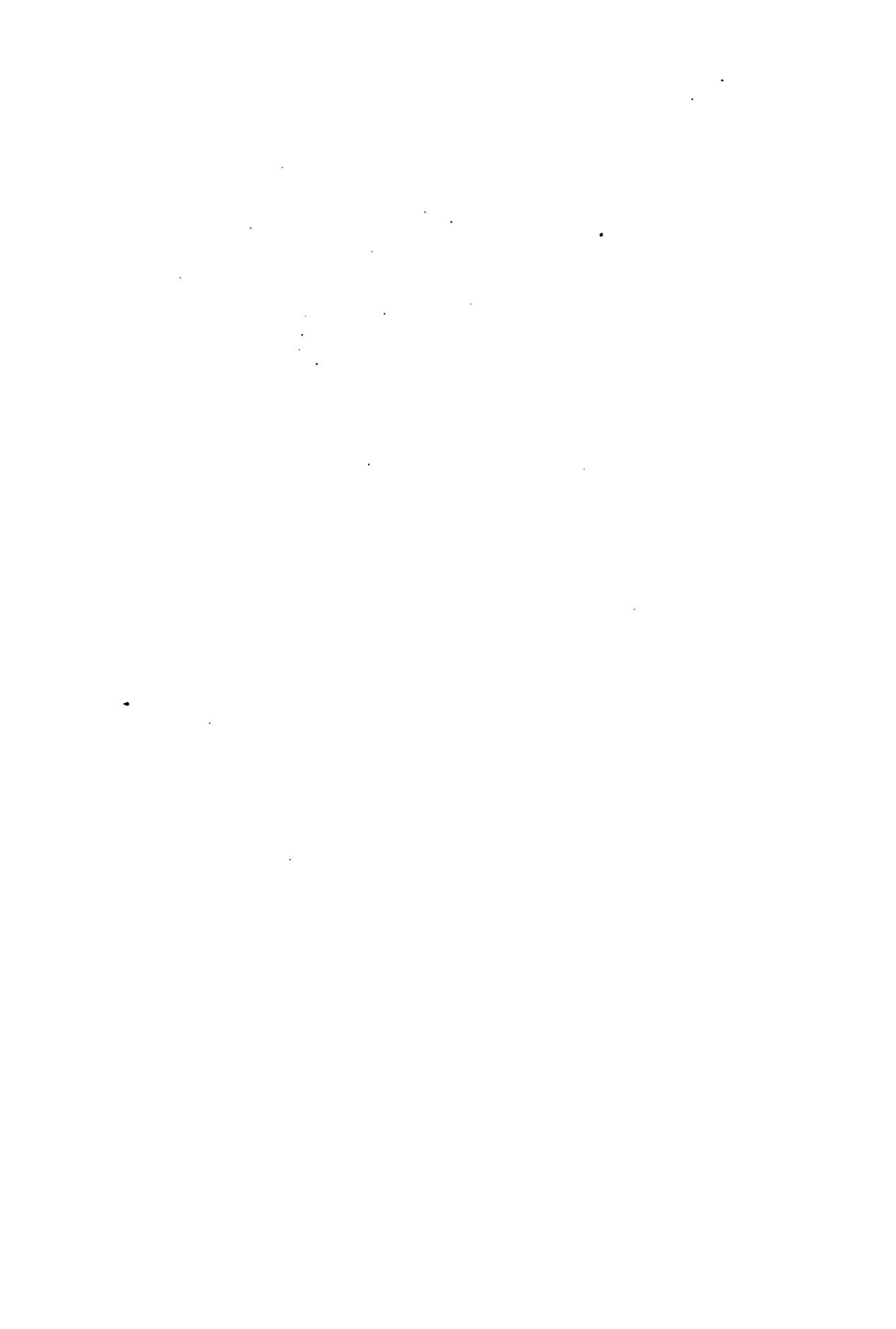
The views taken by these two meetings, the conscientious scruples, the religious obligation felt by them, are as widely known as the cause that has given rise to them, and yet the Conference of the four Yearly Meetings, in its "Address to Friends," recently published, in allusion to the stand taken by these two Yearly Meetings, says: "We believe, nay, we are entirely persuaded, there is nothing now existing in our Society to justify their present position—nothing that should interrupt the ancient practices and friendly relations that formerly existed between all the Yearly Meetings of Friends;" and it entreats them "to put away from *them* all that separates, and again come into that unity which formerly existed and is now so seriously interrupted." Here, then, we have a full indorsement by the Conference, of the principles avowed and the course pursued by the larger body in New England, inasmuch as it declares there is nothing in them which justifies the position occupied by Philadelphia and Ohio Yearly Meetings; and the refusal of those meetings to sanction those principles and acts, is denounced as the sole cause of disunity. The maintenance, then, of the ancient principles of Church government, and the long-established order of our religious Society, or an acquiescence in the principles and practices of the larger body in New England, is the question at issue, and it comes home, or should come home, to the feelings of every member, rendering its right settlement a matter of deep interest to every one who has the welfare of our beloved Society at heart. What the result may be, time will make manifest. Our trust is in the power and overruling providence of Him who raised the Society up for his own praise, and who we believe will not permit it to be utterly laid waste. We sincerely desire the restoration of unity and harmony among its members and its different Meetings, but it

must be in the only right way ; a faithful, uniform support of sound principles: any compromise of these principles only tends to weakness and blindness, inducing disorganization and confusion.

As we have already remarked, the introduction of unsound doctrines into the Society has been the primary cause of the difficulty and divisions now so rife within its borders. From it sprung the course of proceedings that resulted in the separation in New England. The larger body there, however, declare that it has in no degree relaxed in its attachment to the ancient acknowledged faith of the Society of Friends. The attachment of the smaller body to that faith has never been impeached, even by those who have refused to acknowledge them as members. We would then bring home to those who have approved and adopted the "Vindication," the query put by them in its 15th page, in relation to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, with an earnest desire that they may duly appreciate its full import in regard to themselves, and those who are separated from them. "Can it be that brethren of the same faith, members of one household, acknowledging the same standard of doctrine, and led thereby into the support of the same testimonies, can be separated by any feeling of distrust or difference in administration?"

In conclusion, we can cordially adopt the language of the Philadelphia "Report:" "Inasmuch as divisions and subdivisions must always be attended by consequences more or less destructive of the peace and welfare of meetings and families, and of the strength and influence of the Society in supporting its testimonies; it is our sincere and fervent desire that all parties, under a deep sense of the greatness of the cause, and the excellency of the Church government which our Society has been intrusted with and called to support, may, in the sight of the Lord, examine the respective grounds they have taken; and that where any infraction of private rights or of the discipline has been committed, they may be willing, under the constraining power of truth, to acknowledge and do it away. We all profess to act under the government of the same blessed Head of the Church, who laid down his life for our sakes, and taught us that we should lay down our lives for one another; and we

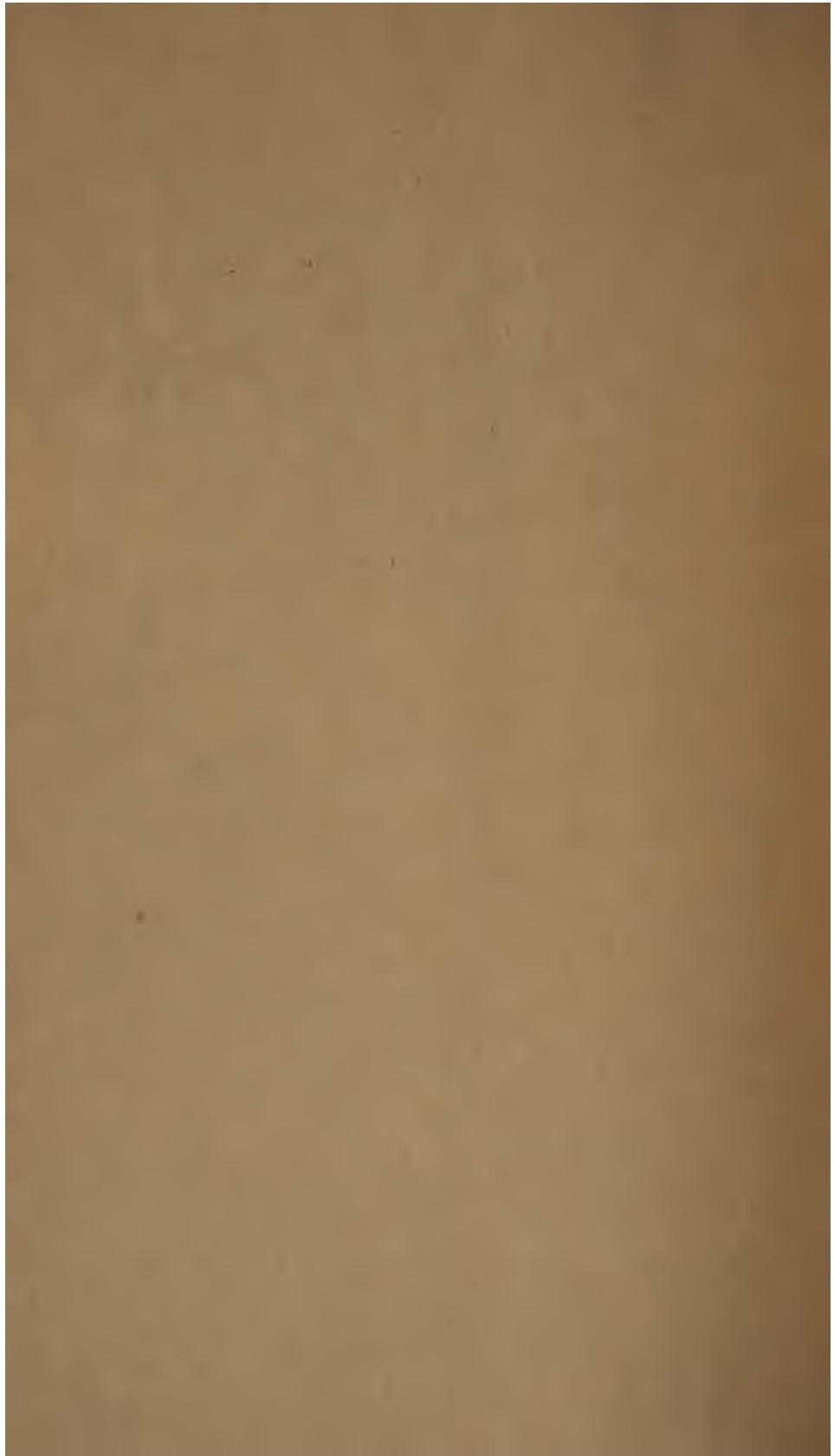
believe that if all classes stand open to the softening influences of the love of God, through his mercy and goodness, everything that has divided and alienated from each other may be entirely removed, and a re-establishment on the right foundation witnessed, in that faith, and love, and unity, which in former years bound together the members of the different Yearly Meetings of our Society."













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